

Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School



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Feast of St Thomas 3rd July 2020

RE: Governor's Summer Newsletter

Dear Parents

At this time of year we would normally be looking forward to the long summer ahead in the knowledge that our children have benefited from a full school year of learning in a classroom with professional staff. However, this was not to be. This year has been very different. We have all had to adapt in a way we could never have imagined. We – the school – will have this in mind as we plan for next year. Mr Marsh has told us how well you have been supporting your children whilst they have been out of school which we know has not always been easy. To our Key Worker parents we say – Thank you and God Bless You – for all that you have done to support us all in this global pandemic. We are acutely aware that you will each have experienced a different 'lock down' with your own challenges, sadness's and worries. We hope that day by day, in your families, you feel the love of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your lives.

Looking forward to the new academic year in September it's clear that all children will be expected to return to school. Government guidance has now been issued and the school's leadership team (SLT) is busy reading and digesting it. There is much work to be done to ensure a safe and smooth return for our children. The school's leadership team will put in place a focussed and effective plan to assess each child's needs and act upon any identified gaps in their learning. This will be the priority at the start of the new academic year. We, the Governing Board, have given the school the best resource possible – additional staff – in order to make this happen.

With Christ in our hearts we grow in love to help others.

You may be aware that the school is a member of an organisation called PiXL. Teachers use PiXL assessments to identify any gaps and then they put in place appropriate “catch up” through further support in class, groups or individual work. The school will use PiXL to identify and plug gaps in the children’s core knowledge. In the first instance our staff will focus on identifying and plugging gaps in reading, writing and numbers because we think it’s vital that all children are literate and numerate. This support will be delivered by the appropriate member of staff who may not be your child’s class teacher – it could be a member of your child’s year group team. We know that the PiXL system works as we have seen its impact in the last two years. The school has historical data for reference and can also compare our children with the children in other schools who are members of the PiXL family too.

As Governors, we strongly believe in the importance of delivering high quality teaching at St Mary’s. We have a happy, motivated, well qualified and dedicated team in a working environment where staff enjoy coming to work and give whole hearted commitment. We know this is true because staff turnover is low. We also know that the staff in school know they are valued by you, the children and us and that because of your support they give their best for our children.

This summer we say goodbye to Mrs Searle-Smith (Jacqui) who has been our nursery teacher since 2014. Jacqui has done so much to get our youngest children off to an outstanding start. Thank you Jacqui and all the best with Kerswell Kids! We also wish Mrs Squillaci (Tina) a belated goodbye and thank you. Tina has not been able to work for some months due to ill health but we wanted to take this opportunity to thank her on your behalf for her particular care as the school’s lead First Aider, Teaching Assistant and Lead lunchtime supervisor since 2001. God Bless you Tina we hope that he continues to grant you better health. We also say goodbye to Miss Springer (Shobi) who leaves us to take up a course in teacher training. Thank you Shobi for your hard work and commitment to our children particularly during the long weeks of lock down. On your behalf and on behalf of the children we thank Jacqui, Tina and Shobi for their hard work and dedication to providing outstanding provision and outcomes for our children. We wish you all the very best for the future.

This year we are in the fortunate position, due to increasing Government funding, to appoint new staff to help meet the new challenge of “catch up”. This will enable the school to create and deliver a robust and targeted plan for our children’s educational and social wellbeing needs. Mr Marsh, in this week’s midweek update letter, set out how the additional staff has been allocated to provide the extra support for each year. As you can appreciate, these are unprecedented times and plans may need to be refined to meet the needs of individual children or year groups. But we want you to know that we, the Governing Board, see plugging these gaps in core knowledge and providing for our children’s physical, emotional and mental health as the main challenges in the year ahead and we will do everything we possibly can to support these needs going forward.

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With regards to the effect this pandemic has had on our families, extra support may now be needed. We would encourage you to share your concerns with Mr Marsh and the SLT as the welfare of all the children and their families plays an important part in maintaining a happy and content school life for all. Mr Marsh is aware of the variety of support that is available and would happily assist you in accessing, or make a referral to the support you may need.

So, there is a lot to consider. We hope this letter may relieve some of the concerns you have about September. We would like to thank you for your support and understanding over the last few months. We will also take this opportunity to acknowledge all the hard work of the school - Mr Marsh, the SLT and the staff. They have worked effectively to move our school through these difficult times; they are to be commended for their tenacity and dedication.

We very much look forward to seeing ALL our children in September. We are preparing to welcome them back and to continue to give them the very best education they deserve and a school life they've so missed. Please be reassured that all will be done to ensure the SLT's plans are in line with the latest Government advice which was published on the 2nd July and you will of course be updated when they are finalised and in place.

In the meantime, we wish you all the very best during the summer and continued good health. We ask that you pray for the children and families of St Mary's the school staff and us too.

God Bless,

Jim Park

Chair of Governors

July 2020

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